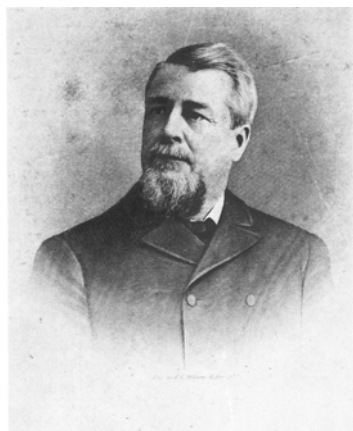


businessmen and the rowdy Red Shirts even as he recognized that the Red Shirts were the “outward and visible sign of the determination here to prevent the negroes from voting.”⁵⁹



Roger Moore
Image: William L.
DeRossett, *Pictorial and
Historical New Hanover
County*.

A crucial figure in the preparations of the city for the potential of violence on election day was Colonel Roger Moore. Moore, a former Confederate cavalry officer, was a member of the city’s aristocratic elite. His family, early settlers of the Cape Fear region, was politically and economically prominent across several generations. In 1868, Moore had organized the first Ku Klux Klan efforts in Wilmington. Owing to his military background and KKK participation, Moore was selected at the age of 60 to command the paramilitary units of citizens. Moore’s widow defended his actions in a letter to the editor after his death in 1900. Mrs. Moore claimed that her husband, with the assistance of Dr. J. E. Matthews, organized and led the “revolution” of 1898. For at least 6 weeks prior to the election, Moore developed “plans by which disaster could be averted” as he built up his organization. She praised the “men who spent many sleepless nights watching and guarding the safety and residents of the whole town.” Her main purpose in writing the letter was to proudly

attach her husband’s name to the riot and prove his actions saved many lives, while discrediting Waddell’s role in the pre-election and pre-riot planning. The organizational framework developed by veteran Moore led to the response of Wilmington whites on November 10—patrols manned by armed, exhausted, tense men who were unfamiliar with near-battle conditions facilitated street fighting on a large scale.⁶⁰

The Wilmington Light Infantry

The Wilmington Light Infantry (WLI) boasted a long history of militia service to North Carolina, having been formed in 1853. Members of the WLI served in the Civil War after being mustered into service by the North Carolina General Assembly on May 10, 1861. After the Civil War, members returned to Wilmington and

⁶⁰ Waddell and Moore held some animosity towards each other. The root of the animosity is unknown but might stem from any number of causes, including their Confederate service record. Waddell was Lt. Col. of the 3rd Regiment, N.C. Cavalry and resigned due to illness in August 1864. Waddell was immediately replaced by Moore who had led the regiment instead of Waddell since June 1864 after the capture of the regiment’s captain. Moore’s widow made a point to explain that Waddell, despite his speechmaking, did not know of the amount of planning that took place behind closed doors, and only after he was appointed mayor did he learn all the details of the coup. She also explained that Moore sought to prevent wholesale slaughter of blacks on the day of the riot at Sprunt’s Compress and at the jail that night. The account given by Moore’s widow is corroborated by William de Rosset in his history of the region. Mrs. Roger Moore, Correspondence, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library; Louis Manarin and Weymouth T. Jordon, Jr., comps., *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1968), 3:180; William Lord de Rosset, *Pictorial and Historical New Hanover County and Wilmington North Carolina, 1723-1938* (Wilmington, 1938), 30-31; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 100-101; Clawson, “The Wilmington Race Riot”; James Cowan, “The Wilmington Race Riot.”

⁵⁹ *Wilmington Messenger*, November 5, 1898.